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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-14 ISO-00 HA-05 H-02 AID-05 CEA-01
CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-01 INR-10 NSAE-00 SP-02
STR-07 TRSE-00 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 SS-15 NSC-05
PA-02 /096 W
----------053846 021826Z /47
R 021725Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7030
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

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USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EEC, SHUM, AR
SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA - A PUBLIC HEARING
SPONSORED BY EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S SOCIALIST GROUP

REF: (A) BRUSSELS EC A-180 (B) BRUSSELS EC A-132

1. SUMMARY: A PUBLIC HEARING ON REPORTED VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA WAS HELD IN BRUSSELS, MAY 25, UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE SOCIALIST GROUP OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (EP) INSTEAD OF THE EP POLITICAL COMMITTEE AS ORIGINALLY INTENDED. LASTING ONE DAY, AND A MODEST EFFORT IN COMPARISON WITH US CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS, THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS MARKED BY THE PRESENCE OF A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE US CONGRESS, MR. CHRISTOPHER DODD, AND RECEIVED TESTIMONY FROM INDIVIDUALS FORMERLY DETAINED BY ARGENTINE AUTHORITIES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF PRIVATE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS. A REPORT ON THE HEARING WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE EP AT ITS JUNE SESSION. END SUMMARY.

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2. WHILE SOME EUROPEAN SOCCER TEAMS WERE WINGING THEIR WAY TO BUENOS AIRES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WORLD SOCCER CUP MATCHES, A PUBLIC HEARING, SPONSORED BY THE SOCIALIST GROUP OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT WAS BEING HELD IN BRUSSELS TO EXAMINE REPORTED VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA. FEW OF THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE HEARING DISPLAYED MUCH INTEREST IN THE SOCCER MATCHES AS THEY DISCUSSED

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THE REPORTED DISAPPEARANCES OF ARGENTINE AND EC
CITIZENS, DETENTIONS WITHOUT TRIAL AND THE USE OF TORTURE
IN ARGENTINA. SOME OF THE WITNESSES DID TAKE THE OCCASION,
HOWEVER, TO EXPRESS THEIR UNHAPPINESS AT THE FAILURE OF THE
EC MEMBER STATES TO PREVENT THE MATCHES FROM TAKING PLACE
IN A COUNTRY WHERE A NUMBER OF THEIR CITIZENS HAVE BEEN
DETAINED OR MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARED AND IN WHICH THERE IS
SAID TO BE WIDESPREAD DENIAL OF FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS.
THEY ALSO ARGUED THAT EC GOVERNMENTS SHOULD NOT BE LULLED
INTO BELIEVING THE MAJOR ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN PUT OUT
BY THE ARGENTINE AUTHORITIES TO THE EFFECT THAT EVERYTHING
IS SWEETNESS AND LIGHT IN ARGENTINA. IN THE MAIN, THE
TESTIMONY FROM THE WITNESSES CENTERED AROUND DESCRIPTIONS
OF CONDITIONS IN ARGENTINA SINCE THE FALL OF PRESIDENT
PERON, TORTURES AND GENERAL ABUSES OF FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN
RIGHTS ALLEGEDLY COMMITTED BY THE ARGENTINE AUTHORITIES.
THE EC WAS URGED TO TAKE A TOUGHER STAND AGAINST ARGENTINA
WITH A VIEW TO CHANGING ITS REPRESSIVE POLICIES, AND SUG-
GESTIONS WERE MADE FOR THE EC TO ADOPT A COMMOM POLICY
ENTAILING: (1) DENIAL OF MILITARY SALES TO ARGENTINA,
(2) DENIAL OF FUNDS FROM INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITU-
TIONS, AND (3) ASSISTING ARGENTINE REFUGEES TO RESETTLE IN
EUROPE. THE EP DELEGATES HAD BEFORE THEM DOCUMENTATION
PREPARED FOR THE PROBE (BEING POUCHED EMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AND EUR/RPE) AND IT WAS AGREED THAT A REPORT ON THE HEAR-
ING WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE EP AT ITS JUNE PLENARY.
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3. BY COMPARISON WITH US CONGRESSIONAL PROBES, THE HEARING
WAS A MODEST AFFAIR WHICH RECEIVED LITTLE PUBLICITY DESPITE
THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS. LASTING ONLY ONE DAY, THERE
WERE ONLY SEVEN WITNESSES, TWO REPRESENTING AMNESTY INTER-
NATIONAL, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COM-
MISSION OF JURISTS, AND FOUR PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS OF IRISH,
ARGENTINE AND URUGUAYAN NATIONALITY WHO SAID THEY HAD BEEN
FORMER PRISONERS IN ARGENTINE JAILS. MOREOVER, THE HEARING
WAS UNUSUAL IN OTHER RESPECTS, THE FIRST BEING THAT IT
WAS NOT CONDUCTED BY A COMPETENT COMMITTEE OF THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, I.E., THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE. THIS SITUATION
AROSE BECAUSE OF THE EP POLITICAL COMMITTEE'S FAILURE TO
SECURE AT THE EP PLENARY IN MAY--OWING TO THE LACK OF A
QUORUM--FULL EP SANCTION FOR ITS MOTION (PREVIOUSLY
ADOPTED IN COMMITTEE) TO HOLD THE PUBLIC HEARING (REF A).
AS A RESULT, THE SOCIALIST GROUP (REPORTEDLY AT THE STRONG
INSISTENCE OF THE BRITISH SOCIALISTS), AS THE PRIME MOVER
FOR CONDUCTING THE PROBE IN LIGHT OF THE WORLD SOCCER CUP
MATCHES AND OF THE ARRESTS AND DISAPPEARANCES OF EUROPEAN
CITIZENS IN ARGENTINA, DECIDED TO ORGANIZE THE PROCEEDINGS
AT ITS OWN EXPENSE. IN AN EFFORT TO GIVE THE HEARING A

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BROADER DIMENSION, THE SOCIALISTS ALSO INVITED THE OTHER EP POLITICAL GROUPS TO PARTICIPATE. THE EP CONSERVATIVE GROUP WAS THE ONLY ONE NOT TO SEND A REPRESENTATIVE BECAUSE OF ITS BELIEF THAT SUCH A HEARING SHOULD FIRST CONCENTRATE ON VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN AREAS CLOSER TO OR WITHIN THE EC.

4. ANOTHER FEATURE OF THE HEARING WAS THE PARTICIPATION OF A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE US CONGRESS, CONGRESSMAN CHRISTOPHER DODD, WHO, AS A MEMBER OF THE US CONGRESS/EP COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS WAS INVITED TO ATTEND (REF B).

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ALTHOUGH HE PARTICIPATED SPARINGLY IN THE DISCUSSION, CONGRESSMAN DODD'S PRESENCE MARKED THE FIRST SUCH PARTICIPATION BY THE US CONGRESS IN THE WORK OF THE EP (ALBEIT ONCE REMOVED).
5. A FURTHER ASPECT OF THE HEARING DEEMED UNUSUAL BY SOME DF THE PARTICIPANTS WAS THE ABSENCE OF ANY REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT TO REBUT OR OTHERWISE COMMENT ON THE CHARGES THAT WERE BEING MADE. IN ANSWER TO A SPECIFIC QUESTION ON THIS POINT, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PROBE EXPLAINED THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE EP POLITICAL COMMITTEE HAD OPPOSED INVITING THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT TO BE PRESENT WHEN THE MATTER WAS DISCUSSED IN COMMITTEE.
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